



THE GREEN BERET VOLCKMANN PROGRAM

MAXIMIZING THE PREVENT STRATEGY

BY THEN-COLONEL ERIC P. WENDT



At the outset of World War II, Army Captain Russell W. Volckmann was serving as a full-time embed in the Philippine army (the executive officer of the 11th Infantry Regiment, 11th Division of the Philippine Army). Volckmann fought alongside his unit when



the Japanese invaded the Philippines, and later, rather than surrender, Volckmann disappeared into the jungles of North Luzon and raised a guerrilla army of more than 22,000 men. For the next three years, he led his guerrillas against the Japanese, and they killed more than 50,000 enemy soldiers. When the Japanese commander of the Philippine occupation force, General Tomiyuki Yamashita, finally surrendered, he made the initial surrender overtures not to MacArthur but to Volckmann.¹ Volckmann went on after the war to help design and create the Green Berets of the U.S. Army Special Forces.

The Problem *(See Figure 1, page 12)*

Throughout the world, al-Qaeda, or AQ, and its affiliates are conducting a multiregion insurgency designed to establish the Caliphate. The United States does not have the capability, measured in either blood or dollars, to lead a fight throughout multiple regions of the world against AQ and its affiliates. If we attempt to conduct the large number of U.S. unilateral operations needed to defeat this AQ assault, we quickly play into AQ's hands, exhausting ourselves and, in the process, negatively affecting long-term, global perceptions of the U.S.

The question then crystallizes — how do we break the current operational paradigm and stop this multiregion insurgency without an overwhelming loss of life, expenditure of funds and loss of international favor because of large, unilateral U.S. actions or unfocused security-assistance efforts? If we attempt to use large-scale security-assistance efforts and funding to build entire host-country militaries and security forces around the world and let them address this AQ

***Editors Note:** This article was the genesis of the Volckmann Project which is currently in a test phase. This article was written by then-Col. Eric P. Wendt, while he was assigned as the principal military assistant to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.*

Figure 1:**Problem Solving Sequence**

1. Identify the problem.
2. Identify the solution.
3. Organize, train, equip and deploy for the solution.²
4. Re-assess.

Figure 2:**Title X and Title XXII**

The Volckmann program leverages authorities already available in Title X and Title XXII.

Figure 3:**The Primacy of the Prevention Strategy****PREVENT >****PRE-EMPT >****DEFEAT****Figure 4:****The Primacy of Host Country-Led Efforts****HOST COUNTRY-LED EFFORT >****EQUAL EFFORTS >****U.S.-LED EFFORTS**

problem in their own countries, can we be assured that we are wisely spending U.S. taxpayer dollars funding the most critical host-country units in the fight properly? Are we unintentionally squandering our national treasure on units or organizations that are not key contributors in the fight against AQ? Are we using centralized drive-by assessments of the needs of key host-country units in the fight against AQ? Is there a way to remove what may currently be a myopic view of the requirements of these critical host-country units? Is there a way to synergize the capabilities inherent in Title X and Title XXII authorities? *See Figure 2.*

This article will discuss two items: first, the adoption of a strategy that helps host-country security forces prevent (as opposed to pre-empt or defeat) the enemy, and second, the creation of the Volckmann Program, which would be composed of a small number of culturally savvy Green Berets who would serve repeated rotations to a single country within their region of expertise while embedding inside critical host-country units. With the unique “behind-the-curtain” perspective offered by service as a host-unit embed, the Volckmann operators would not only train and operate against AQ alongside their host units, but direct with focused precision the U.S. security-assistance efforts that address the real needs of these critical host units, with the net result of fewer U.S. taxpayer dollars being spent and a greater operational effect against AQ.

The Solution: The Prevent Strategy, Using Host Country Led Efforts and Minimal U.S. Footprint

Prevent > pre-empt > defeat - *See Figure 3.* As we anticipate the battle with AQ and its affiliates — block by block, town by town, country by country and region by region — the first hypothesis is that it is better to help host-country forces prevent a widespread AQ problem than to deal with it after it blossoms. Prevention limits the cost in U.S. blood and treasure.

If we fail in the prevention phase, and AQ and its affiliates begin to build a substantial capability in a country, then it is better to pre-empt the problem through the use of U.S. raids on high-value targets and a continuous, fairly significant U.S. presence in the countries. If we fail at pre-emption, and the problem grows into a full-fledged war, then we will have to fight to defeat it, using massive numbers of U.S. forces and treasure in large-scale combat.

We can liken this prevent strategy to restricting the spread of cancer. As in fighting cancer, it is better to take relatively cheap, proactive measures with diet, exercise, sun-screen, etc., to prevent the cancer rather than to neglect the matter and have the cancer grow. If prevention fails and a small cancer begins to develop, it is better to pre-empt the cancer with early treatment or removal than to wait until it spreads and requires more invasive surgery, coupled with radiation or chemotherapy, to defeat it.

How do we best posture ourselves to prevent AQ and its affiliates from establishing significant footholds? If we fail in our efforts to help the hosts prevent the AQ problem, can we at least position ourselves during the prevent effort so that we would be more capable if we have to move to the pre-empt or defeat options? Being forced to use U.S. resources to pre-empt represents the failure of proactive prevention, and the use of U.S. resources for large-scale defeat operations represents the failure of both prevention and pre-emption. As unattractive as pre-empt and defeat operations are, that does not change the fact that we must wisely use prevention efforts that can be leveraged, if necessary, to facilitate pre-empt and defeat missions. The bottom line is that we must strive to use prevention as the most effective strategy.

Host country-led efforts for the prevent strategy - *See Figure 4.* Given that prevention is the most effective strategy for confronting widespread insurgency, we must grapple with the question of who provides the bulk of the effort and resources to implement a proactive, anti-AQ prevention approach. Should we attack the problem with U.S.-led effort and minimal host-country effort, or with equal involvement, effort and resourcing between the two countries? Or should we attack the problem with host-country led effort and minimal U.S. resourcing?

Attempting to use primarily U.S.-led and resourced efforts or to working in an even split of efforts and resourcing with host countries around the globe is problematic. Using

these approaches will exhaust the U.S. supply of blood, treasure, political will and public support, as well as weaken its international standing. We must strive to maximize the usage of host-country resources to fuel the prevention strategy. The smaller U.S. footprint that results will also yield a more positive world perception of the United States.

Organize, Train, Equip and Deploy Volckmann Operators to Execute the Solution

Role of the numbered SF groups. During his presidency, John F. Kennedy confronted what he believed to be a multiregion problem by creating the Peace Corps and the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as expanding the U.S. Army Special Forces and creating the Navy SEALs — all separate and critical tools in a multiregion fight.

While the solution to the anti-AQ multi-region problem obviously involves the comprehensive efforts of the entire combined, joint, interagency, international and private sectors, a detailed discussion of all these areas is beyond the scope of this essay. Just as they were when Kennedy expanded the Green Berets to help wage what he saw as a multiregion fight, the Green Berets of the numbered Special Forces groups are ideally suited and capable of being organized, trained, equipped and deployed so that they can optimally assist host-country militaries, key security agencies and other select host-country units to prevent AQ and its affiliates from establishing (or increasing) footholds in host countries with a minimal U.S. footprint. These members of the Volckmann Program would work “with, through and by”³ foreign forces.

Green Beret Volckmann Program. The proposed Volckmann Program would stress the need for a few Green Berets from each numbered Special Forces group to be thoroughly steeped in select languages and cultures, and would produce Soldiers who are experts in individual countries and select key units (unlike foreign-area officers, who are regional experts) in support of a persistent-presence approach. Volckmann operators would embed in key host-country units using the authorities of the Title X Partnership Exchange Program, or PEP, and while operating as a part of those units would enjoy an insider perspective that would allow them to identify units’ shortfalls in equipment, schooling, training and operational capability. A portion of the Volckmann operator training would include attendance at the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management Course, or DISAM, so that the Volckmann operators, with their embedded insights, could correctly identify key host-unit requirements to the U.S. embassy’s security cooperation office, or SCO, for proper attention and fielding. The Volckmann program offers a synergistic approach, using Title XXII security-assistance authorities along with the Title X PEP embed status of the SF Volckmann operators.

It must be clearly understood that to holistically address the special-operations portion of the multiregion insurgency problem would require multiple elements of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command and joint SOF elements. To correctly cater to the localized terrain and problem set of each host country requires a joint SOF approach, but the design and discussion of the numerous and distinct programs required by each service to bring this joint SOF goal to fruition is simply beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, this essay focuses on the Volckmann Program, which specifically focuses on the Green Berets of the numbered SF groups, who have been de-

signed from their inception to be force multipliers and are therefore a natural fit for this effort.

Organize, train, equip. Using one Army SF Soldier to illustrate the Volckmann Program, the Green Beret would serve at least three years on an A-detachment (officers would serve two years on an A-detachment and a third year in another assignment within the SF group). At the end of that three-year apprenticeship in the regionally focused SF group, the Soldier would be eligible to apply for a three-year Volckmann position in his SF group’s area of responsibility, or AOR.

After a Green Beret has been assigned a target country, he and his family (if he has one) attend a one- to two-week course that prepares him for living and working overseas alongside other members of the U.S. embassy’s country team.

At that point, the Soldier and his family could still choose to opt out of the Volckmann Program, or the instructors of the orientation course could recommend his removal. If a Green Beret is approved at the end of the orientation course, he would attend the full-length language-training course for his target language, achieving at least a 2/2/2 language rating. His spouse would also be eligible to attend language training at that time, which would pay enormous dividends for the U.S. as the complete family builds rapport in the target country with repeated tours of duty.

Finally, after graduation from language school, the Soldier would attend the DISAM course, followed by a one- to two-week primer that presents the absolute latest tactics, techniques and procedures, or TTPs, for special-operations forces, or SOF, and counterinsurgency, or COIN, that can be taught to the host-country security forces.⁴ With those qualifications, he would deploy to his target country with his family (whenever possible) and be administratively assigned to the SCO at the U.S. embassy for a three-year, nonextendable assignment. As a full-fledged, permanent member of the SCO, the Volckmann operator and his family would live in the same type of quarters as other embassy employees. The Volckmann operator’s children would be eligible to attend the same high-quality international schools that children of other U.S. embassy personnel attend. Once the SF Soldier completed the three-year tour at the SCO, he would receive the Volckmann skill identifier and return to his regionally focused SF group or theater special operations command, or TSOC, for another three-year tour of duty.

The Volckmann operator would provide experience and knowledge of the latest COIN and SOF TTPs, coupled with his security assistance DISAM qualification and embed-level understanding of his key host-unit’s security-assistance needs. That powerful combination of attributes would result in the targeted, streamlined and effective usage of the U.S. security-assistance system on behalf of these vital host-country units. Forcing departure and return to the regionally focused SF group after three years in country would keep the individual Soldier current with TTPs, prevent an overly long overseas tour for his family, and bring his wealth of knowledge from the in-country Volckmann tour back to his SF group, where it could be fully leveraged.

After three years back in his SF group or TSOC, the Green Beret would be eligible for a second three-year Volckmann assignment in the same country (not just the same region). The Volckmann operator would have to maintain assignments to the same country if he is to achieve deep relationships, knowledge and expertise. The cycle of

alternating three-year assignments between the same regionally focused SF group or TSOC and the in-country Volckmann tours would be repeated throughout the operator's career.

Some Volckmann operators might marry host-country spouses while on their in-country tours, and many of those spouses would likely welcome multiple return tours to their home country. Those repeated assignments would further deepen the relationships and interoperability with the target country and its key security leaders. For the Volckmann operators married to non-host-country spouses, the three-year tour length would still provide a manageable assignment.

Over the course of their careers, Soldiers who had the Volckmann identifier would perform numerous in-country Volckmann tours. They would garner incredibly detailed knowledge of the target country, its issues, its politics and personalities, as well as gaining superb language capabilities (growing to 3/3/3 language capability), local knowledge, contacts and insights. Most importantly,

“Volckmann operators can serve repeated tours of duty in-country and remain competitive for command-sergeant-major, CW5 or battalion/group/TSOC-command positions.”

they would build tremendous relationships with the leaders, families and members of the host-country military and security units they worked with. As the Volckmann operators assessed, trained and deployed with the host-country security units, they could add significantly to the anti-AQ proactive prevention strategy with the small U.S. footprint that we desire.

SF NCOs who have completed an initial tour of duty on an A-detachment, as well as SF officers from CW2 to O6, should be encouraged to serve in the Volckmann program. Volckmann service would come at some expense to other SOF headquarters' staffs, but the forward presence and increased capabilities and effects for the U.S. would be well worth the reduction to other SOF staff headquarters elements.

To establish SF Volckmann PEP participation at all levels in key host units, we would initially fill these positions with senior and junior SF officers and NCOs who have some level of country and language expertise. Eventually, young SF officers working as Volckmann operators would grow into the battalion, group and TSOC commanders of the future.⁵ Promotion boards would have to be instructed to promote and select (not inhibit) Volckmann operators for key billets in the SF groups and TSOCs at rates commensurate with their peers. The presence of the Volckmann operators in-country and in the SF groups and TSOCs would provide a quantum leap forward in the fight against AQ. Volckmann operators would be true force multipliers.

New headquarters not required. The Volckmann program does not require a new headquarters. Volckmann operators would be administratively assigned on permanent change of station, or PCS, orders to the SCOs that exist around the globe (joint U.S. military assistance and advisory groups, military groups, etc.) in target countries. Once Volckmann operators have been assigned to these target-country SCOs, they would be further assigned to Title X PEP embed

positions within key host-country security units. There are many countries that would accept and immediately place PEP Volckmann operators of all ranks into their key host-country units.

The U.S. country teams would embrace Volckmann operators because they would not be perceived as “rogue” temporary SOF elements or individuals within the country. Instead, Volckmann operators, as PCS members of SCO and the country team, would avoid any perceived issues with National Security Decision Directive 38, or NSDD 38.

The number and paygrades of Volckmann operators in each country would vary based on an analysis of the country's key military and security units needed to conduct the anti-AQ fight. In many countries, there would be only a few Volckmann operators. They would train and operate daily with the key host-country units with whom they embedded. Volckmann operators would deploy with their host-country units if the hosts deployed to conduct operations against AQ or its affiliates, either within or outside their country's borders.

Volckmann operators assigned to embassy SCOs. The U.S. embassies worldwide are the only practical hubs for these prevention efforts. Volckmann operators must join the embassy SCO on a full-time PCS basis, not during episodic SOF engagements in a host country or as temporary embassy squatters. The correct office of assignment for Volckmann operators in this full-time effort would be the SCO rather than the defense-attaché offices, or DAOs. DAOs perform a highly valuable mission with information gathering, but the DAO (and its known status as an information-gatherer), is anathema for Volckmann entrance into U.S. country teams, where building long-term relationships and trust within host units is required. Assigning Volckmann operators within the SCO, where they can immediately use their DISAM training to inject needed security assistance into the critical units in each host country, would also help develop the trust and relationships that we desire with the host country.

The baseline is that Volckmann operators should be assigned in PCS status as overt, nonclandestine, non-attaché, SCO personnel. The Volckmann operators must be fully accepted by the country team and fully accepted as “non-spies” by the host-country units in which they embed.

Where to deploy Volckmann operators. First, we look at the world and define those places where AQ and its affiliates either thrive, could likely thrive or gather key support in the future. Second, we look at countries that would likely volunteer to export their own forces to assist in the anti-AQ fight of a different country (should a selected host-country fight develop into pre-empt or defeat status). The countries identified with these criteria are now “target countries” for the Volckmann Program.

Once target countries have been identified, relevant host-country units will be identified, along with key PEP-embed positions for the Volckmann operators.

Command relationships. Volckmann operators must be PCS-assigned to the U.S. embassy SCOs to avoid all real or perceived NSDD 38 issues and to be fully accepted by all members of the country team.

The SCO chief in each country would have administrative control of the Volckmann operators, and with it the constant visibility of the whereabouts of Volckmann operators and their families. Volckmann operators would constantly interface with the SCO chief as they submit the security-assistance needs of the key host-country units to the SCO. The rating chain and operational control of the Volckmann operators would both run directly from the Volckmann operator to the TSOC. That rating chain would keep the Volckmann operator competitive for promotion, while the line of operational control to the TSOC gives the commander of the geographic combatant command, or GCC, the ability to nest the effects of the Volckmann operators with other tools used by the GCC commander, and allows the TSOC (which is receiving reports from multiple Volckmann operators in multiple target countries⁶) to help network that critical information. Since it takes a network to fight a network,⁷ the decentralized network of Volckmann operators would increase with compounded interest the effects the United States desires against AQ.

The TSOC would provide frequent executive summary reports on the plans and actions of Volckmann operators to each respective chief of mission, or COM, thereby ensuring that COMs are fully aware of and comfortable with all Volckmann activities in their country.

In sum, the Volckmann operators' PCS status would facilitate optimal anti-AQ effects while simultaneously ensuring full COM oversight and country-team acceptance of the Volckmann operators and their families.

How many Volckmann operators are needed? Manning key units in up to 60 host countries with Volckmann operators of all ranks and maintaining a continuous cycle of three years in-country, three years back at the SF group or TSOC, and the Volckmann-operator training pipeline might eventually consume one to two SF battalions' worth of manpower. We should therefore measure twice and cut once as we prioritize, scale and pace our movement into selected host-unit PEP billets and countries. We must prioritize countries and units and begin manning a few pilot countries with Volckmann operators immediately.

With the nickel-on-the-dollar investment that we make today to establish the network of proactive, preventive, decentralized Volckmann operators in host countries and key units around the globe, we can leverage prevention effects and synergize the capabilities inherent in Title X and Title XXII authorities to facilitate victory in the fight against AQ and its affiliates. We can save large sums of U.S. taxpayer dollars by effectively targeting our security-assistance efforts on relevant host-country units that are key in the anti-AQ fight, and with the help of the PEP-embed Volckmann operators, scratch the needed security-assistance itch with precision while increasing the operational capability of key anti-AQ host units with the daily training and assistance that only an embed can provide. Our Volckmann operators and families will operate with purity of motive and purity of effort from the SCOs around the globe and will build goodwill internationally for the U.S. If these prevention strategy efforts should fail, the deep relationships, access, knowledge of host-country geography, personalities, and language and cultural understanding harvested by these forward-stationed Volckmann operators will ideally position us for U.S. pre-emption events, or in the worst case, for actions in a large-scale U.S. general-purpose-forces war against AQ and its affiliates.

It is all about relationships. Green Beret Volckmann operators would develop those relationships, and the U.S. would be the ultimate benefactor for decades to come. With the support of senior leaders in DoD, SOF, the GCCs and the U.S. Army, a quick implementation of the Volckmann Program is possible. The fight is on, and the implementation of the Volckmann Program offers our country a powerful and continuous series of blows to AQ for a minimal price in U.S. blood and treasure. **SW**

Then-Colonel Eric P. Wendt. Maj. Gen. Eric P. Went is now the Commanding General, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

Notes:

1. Mike Guardia, *American Guerrilla* (Havertown, Penn.: Casemate Publishers, 2010), 7.

2. The correct problem-solving sequence is shown in diagram 1. Often problems are incorrectly addressed by starting analysis with an organization that already exists (step 3), then trying to develop a solution the current organization is capable of executing (step 2). This backward problem-solving process often yields solutions that may or may not have any relation to the actual problem (step 1), thereby yielding disjointed, sub-optimal results. The correct problem solving order shown in diagram 1 will yield better results.

3. The terms "with, through and by" have been codified in order and meaning in the definitive Department of Defense Instruction 5000.68, dated 27 October 2010. Per the new DoD Instruction definition: *with, though and by* describes the process of interaction with foreign security forces that initially involves training and assisting (interacting "with" the forces). The next step in the process is advising, which may include advising in combat situations (acting "through" the forces). The final phase is achieved when foreign security forces operate independently (act "by" themselves).

4. The models discussed in the article, "Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling" (Eric P. Wendt, *Special Warfare*; September 2005; 2-13), should be taught as a part of the final preparation course for Volckmann candidates prior to deployment so that they, in turn, can then teach these models to key leaders in their target countries. Many of the models contained in the article (including Dr. Gordon McCormick's brilliant diamond model, which has been successfully operationalized since 9/11) were created, developed and continue to be taught by Dr. Gordon McCormick of the Naval Postgraduate School's SOLIC program (now called the Defense Analysis Program).

5. Some forward-leaning TSOC commanders (SOCCENT and others) have developed TSOC forward, regional SOF C2 nodes within their theaters in addition to single country JSOTFs. When not serving an in-country three-year Volckmann tour, Volckmann operators will be ideal candidates to serve within these TSOC forward, regional C2 nodes, as well as within JSOTFs located within their target country.

6. Volckmann operators in different units and different countries should be encouraged to communicate directly with each other on a frequent basis (as well to periodically meet face-to-face at selected TSOC sponsored venues) to enhance the networking effects of this concept.

7. Dr. John Arquilla, *Worst Enemy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publishing, 2008).